

STATEMENT
OF
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
VICE CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
JUNE 4TH, 2003 HEARING
ON THE
IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES CONFRONTING
TRIBAL FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
PROGRAMS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on the challenges confronting tribal fish and wildlife management programs in the Pacific Northwest.

Yesterday, the Committee received testimony on the good work that is being conducted by tribal fish and wildlife management programs across Indian country.

We learned from the written testimony that was submitted that in the Pacific Northwest, there are a series of complex relationships with a myriad of Federal agencies in which tribal resource managers are engaged.

Or put another way, there are an array of Federal agencies whose responsibilities have an impact upon the health and the habitat of fish and wildlife resources.

Some of those agencies join the Committee today – including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Fisheries Service, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the Bonneville Power Administration.

But there are other agencies including the U.S. Forest Service of

the Department of Agriculture, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Planning Council, the Environmental Protection Agency, the military services of the Department of Defense, and the Department of Energy whose activities have an impact on the natural resources for which tribal governments serve as stewards.

Of course, there are also important relationships with the respective states in which tribal lands are located, as well as international bodies that have been established to oversee the implementation of provisions of international treaties, such as the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Just as there must be a careful balance between the forces of nature and the impacts of human activities on precious natural resources, there must also be well-coordinated and cooperative relationships amongst all of these entities to assure the preservation and protection of fish and wildlife.

We know that some of the Federal agencies have suffered severe cuts in their operating budgets, and that more and more, tribal

governments are engaged in supplementing Federal responsibilities under various Federal laws with their own resources.

And we know that at some point, tribal governments will no longer be able to maintain their current level of effort in the absence of enhanced Federal support.

So it may be that we have to look to other sources of funding or establish new authority for the funding of activities that some of these agencies are no longer able to fully sustain.

Because there has been some confusion generated about this hearing, I want to be clear that we are not here today to scold or chastise any agency.

Rather, we want to develop an accurate understanding of what the present capabilities are and where we may need to address some gaps.

We want to know what is working, and what may need to be adjusted or fixed.

With that, I would like to advise the witnesses today that in response to a request from one of my colleagues in the Senate, we

have departed from the Senate's customary protocol so that the Federal agencies who are represented here today, have the opportunity to hear the tribal testimony before they testify.

Accordingly, our last panel today will be composed of the instrumentalities of the United States government that have such an important role to play in assuring the long life and well being of fish and wildlife resources, and in carrying out the United States' trust responsibility for Indian lands and resources.

I am pleased to welcome an old friend of the Committee's – one of the preeminent scholars of Federal Indian law and a well-known author of many books and law review articles, Professor Charles Wilkinson.

And I also want to welcome back our esteemed tribal leader, Mr. Bill Frank, Jr., Chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

Gentlemen, welcome, and please proceed.